

**CREATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR INCREASED EMERGENCY RESPONSE  
COVERAGE IN THE GREATER McCLOUD AREA**

**STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION**

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## ABSTRACT

The American Fire Service is faced with increasing roles and responsibilities with stable or declining budgets. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) is faced with a similar problem. Most administrative units have not received an increase in operating budgets in this decade. This problem was further magnified by the increase in demand for service by the private sector. The question was asked of the fire service provider (CDF), “What can you do to increase our emergency response capability, with limited funds? In the McCloud Battalion of the Siskiyou Ranger Unit in Northern California the question is no different.

The purpose of this research paper is to discover old, new and modified methods of providing an increase in emergency response service to the citizens of the greater McCloud area. Using the historical and evaluative research methods, the following four research questions were explored:

1. What is the current level of emergency service offered to the citizens of the greater McCloud area?
2. What type of emergency service is most important to the citizens?
3. What programs are best suited, keeping budget and as the limiting factor?
4. What stable funding source is available and cost effective to the citizens?

A door to door survey was conducted of 80 households within a 5-minute response of the McCloud station in an attempt to answer a portion of these questions. In addition other (CDF) units with similar programs and problems, along with Siskiyou County, were contacted for

possible solutions. The results of this research have indicated that policy limits internal solutions, based on administrative interpretation and the current leadership of both (CDF) and Siskiyou County. The recommendation, suggested in the research, was to modify existing CDF policy with Siskiyou Ranger Unit specific policy. This solution would leave individual interpretation to a minimum.

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## INTRODUCTION

This research paper will address the problem of limited emergency response to the citizens of the greater McCloud area. The purpose of the applied research is to define and develop means and methods of increasing the emergency response capability of the fire service provider in order to deliver more rapid service to the public.

The historic and evaluative research method will be used by exploring the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) and Siskiyou County policy and procedures, it will also explore the potential for the privatization of these emergency response services. The following four research questions will be explored:

1. What is the current level of emergency service offered to the citizens of the greater McCloud area?.
2. What type of emergency service is most important to the citizens?
3. What programs are best suited, keeping budget and as the limiting factor?
4. What stable funding source is available and cost effective to the citizens?

This research will conclude that an increase of prompt emergency response is possible by the current service provider (CDF) by using state and county policy and procedures. The possibility for the privatization of services will be found too expensive given the current population and funding circumstances.

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) has been in existence for over 75 years. It is the largest wildland fire department in the world and has established an international reputation as the premier wildland fire fighting organization today (Thornton, 1997). Currently CDF has direct fire protection responsibility for 32 million acres (roughly one-third) of the land in California. CDF's management structure is divided into one central office, staffed by an executive officer, and supporting functions; two area offices (north and south), and eighteen ranger units. This structure allows for a manageable span of control, with each ranger unit operating, for emergency purposes, very much like individual fire protection departments (CDF, 1996). The management of CDF's statewide mission is standardized and achieved through the two offices. These offices provide the intermediary level of coordination for the statewide consistency in the application of policy and directives, and they serve as primary command and control center for multiple major emergencies (California State Personnel Board (SPB), 1996).

The problem in the Siskiyou Ranger Unit and the McCloud area is the inability of (CDF) to supply an affective emergency response system for the winter period. In addition to the primary wildland fire mission, CDF has fostered contracts with counties, cities and districts throughout the state providing complete emergency response. In southern California, Riverside County responds to over 66,00 emergency responses annually. California State Law gives other options for protection. The "Amador" law, named from the county of origin, gives public entities the option to contract with CDF in order to provide additional emergency response services during the period of the year not normally protected during the wildland (summer) season (Public Resources Code 4144). Traditionally this is during the winter period; not

exceeding six months. This program charges the county for the enhancement to the base employee salary for emergency response, equipment and radio use, a portion of facility maintenance, along with an administrative fee.

In Siskiyou County an “Amador” contract has been in place with CDF since the mid 1970’s. This provides basic coverage, and most important, the enhancement provided by the existing volunteer forces. The area around the town of McCloud has had this same service; but the travel time from the existing Amador station was over 30 minutes and most citizens wanted faster service. In 1992, CDF built a station in the McCloud area and by the fall of 1993 were approached to provide increased protection to the surrounding area. The Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors was contacted requesting an expansion of the existing Amador program. This request was denied, based on financial reasons. The community was told that to have increased protection, the cost would have to come from the McCloud area. As a result, CDF was contacted and provided an estimate of \$25,000 to provide six months of station coverage with five employees on rotating shifts (G.Folz, personal interview, November 20,1997).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A general overview of literature pertaining to optimizing response and service quality was based on internal CDF, and Siskiyou County policy. The literature also emphasized the tradition of government being the driving force for service, as opposed to public demand. This points to the difficulties inherent in attempting to apply traditional policy and laws to a non-traditional problem.

CDF policy needs to begin with a review of the department's Mission, Vision and Value Statements. Summarized, these state that emergency response, fostering cooperative agreements and partnerships, innovation, public safety, and pride in service are pivotal to organization (CDF, 1994). The "Cooperative Fire Services Manual," was the basis for all the cooperative agreements currently in use. The review of these existing agreements defined the current Amador agreement in place in Siskiyou County. The Amador agreement is limited to 3 person effective station staffing only. Further expansion of contracts was viewed but ruled out due to the need for expansion of the CDF infrastructure in the Siskiyou Ranger Unit and the extreme cost associated with it (CDF, Co-op Fire, 1994). No other existing contracts were found that could be used to provide services to the public. The Incident Fiscal Management manual was researched and a mechanism to hire "emergency workers" was found, the FC 42 Policy. This policy was based on an old concept where the Director of CDF had the ability to require people to assist in the suppression of "forest fires". The FC 42 policy writing had significant room for interpretation and further research found that the CDF Riverside Unit, used this ability to hire emergency workers and is being used to pay "Paid-call firefighters"(CDF, Incident Fiscal Management, 1994). Discussion of this possibility was brought to the attention



of Jack Wiest, Area Chief for CDF who determined that the FC 42 Policy could be used to pay emergency workers for emergency responses in the Siskiyou Ranger Unit (J. Mower, personal interview, December 1,1997). Further review of these manuals and further policy found no other use in this project.

Siskiyou County policy was discussed with the Assistant County Administrator, Cheryl Davis and the Assistant County Auditor, Leanna Dancer. Recaps of the California Government Code were reviewed. No further research on the California Government Code was done by researcher. “The Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors has established a county wide service area in 1994, but failed to fund. The philosophy was for areas to find and establish their own funding source by means of a ballot measure. Any funds that are generated by these ballot measures may not be used for salaries.” (L. Dancer, personal interview, Oct. 11,1997) “The existing contract with CDF for Amador may be modified to pay for these workers because excess funds will be available. There currently are no other means for the County of Siskiyou to assist the McCloud area for additional emergency fire response.” (C. Davis, personal interview, Oct. 6,1997)

Alan Brunacini, Fire Chief of Phoenix Arizona, stated at a recent seminar that, “Fire Departments change slow, based on crisis we model on the inside what we do on the outside.” This is the basis for “Customer Service” and the need for a more rapid approach to customer needs and wants (Brunicini, Fire Service West Seminar, March 21,1997). An interview with Ron Coleman, California State Fire Marshall on privatization and non-traditional service found, “The Fire service is equity based on service focused on equal protection for all. The private sector is good at measuring its effectiveness where the fire service is poor at this same

measurement. It is time to expand our roles to look into creative approaches to service where the public need is greatest.”(R.J. Coleman, personal interview, April 11, 1996) Further review of new approaches at an old problem found, “Many local governments must deal with taxpayers who are no longer willing to pay for increasingly expensive services. In order to meet the will of the people, elected officials are looking for innovative methods to provide traditional services. The key to survival will be to adapt to change and learn from what private industry has done” (Coon, 1995). Rural Metro, the leading private sector provider of fire protection services in the U.S. based in Scottsdale, Arizona, has provided private fire protection since 1948. The company started with the beginning of the community and has grown along with the increase in population. Rural Metro has found the per capita cost of fire service is 60% of the national average (Rural Metro, 1993). The ability for Mutual and Automatic Aid (see Definition of Terms) has been a concern for co-operating agencies. Rural Metro has used modified staffing schedules and cross training of personnel to provide service at the peak periods but fail to have guaranteed staffing. Looking at the McCloud area, privatization was ruled out for many of the same reasons as contracting with CDF for full protection services. The cost for salaries and the needed infrastructure would prove prohibitive, plus CDF provides service for 6 months per year.

Review of all the literature and persons interviewed found the existence of means to provide service at a cost that would be supported by the citizens of the McCloud area. The discussion with Chief Wiest was more than informative for this applied research but in addition provided a means to begin a “paid call” program. This is currently in place in the McCloud area. Rural Metro was contacted for an interview but failed to respond.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Population**

A survey of 80 households, within a 5-minute response time of the McCloud station that would be most affected by a ballot measure, was conducted during the summer 1994 (Appendix A).

### **Instrumentation**

A four question questionnaire was prepared and given verbally during a pre-plan or prevention visit. The results were compiled and forwarded to the advisory board. The questionnaire required responses in the following area:

Question one requested information on the current perception of existing emergency service.

Question two requested what service is the most importance to the resident.

Question three asked if contracting with Siskiyou County for additional protection would be of a benefit.

Question four asked if the citizen would be willing to pay for this increase in service.

### **Collection of Data**

Raw data was compiled into categories indicated by the respondents. CDF station personnel performed this compilation (Appendix A). The data was reviewed by the advisory board and used to direct and prioritize their actions.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

It was assumed that all respondents would answer honestly with the same basic knowledge base.

The survey was limited by only contacting those households within a 5-minute response time of the McCloud CDF station. Those living outside this 5-minute circle may have other concerns or priorities.

### **Definition of Terms**

<b>Amador</b>	A contractual agreement between a public agency and the CDF in order to have CDF provide emergency response during that portion of the year not normally staffed.
<b>Automatic Aid</b>	Automatic Aid is when two or more agencies respond automatically across jurisdictional borders to render mutual assistance in combating emergencies by prior agreement.
<b>CDF</b>	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.
<b>FC-42</b>	Form used by CDF to pay temporary “emergency workers.”
<b>Mutual Aid</b>	Mutual Aid is an agreement in which two or more agencies agree to help each other when emergency conditions exist within the jurisdiction of a local agency that overwhelms the services, personnel, equipment and facilities of that agency.
<b>USFS</b>	United States Forest Service.

## RESULTS

Re-examination of the original research questions of this project draws the following results.

1. What is your perception of existing emergency response capability to your home?

A review of the 80 households revealed that there is a belief that existing service providers would respond to any emergency they would have at their home. The basic confusion was generated by the missions of the CDF and United States Forest Service (USFS), who are only funded for responses during the summer months. Some of the residents believed that the McCloud Fire Department would respond.

2. What level of service do you expect from your emergency responders?

Overwhelming support for any type of response was the consensus. The citizens wanted to have an engine and/or ambulance at their home whenever necessary. The jurisdiction had nothing to do with the need for a response.

3. Would contracting with Siskiyou County be an expectable solution?

Concern was expressed about basic government, and not using the money for its intended purpose. Examples were cited of other programs whose funds were diverted to special projects. When further explanation was made that Siskiyou County has no fire department, but that the services would be contracted to CDF and the existing station and personnel at the McCloud station. This was met with positive response, for most liked the fact of utilizing the existing station.

4. Would you be willing to pay for an increase in service?

Again overwhelming support for service was shown. The money was not an issue. Protection for themselves and their families was the concern, as long as the money was used for its intended purpose.

During the door-to-door information campaign survey the McCloud CDF station personnel found the citizens to be impressed that a governmental agency would come and explain a solution to a problem they had been faced with for a number of years. During the same time, the county was developing the number of parcels in the effected area. The figure of 1199 parcels was retrieved and using a formula from a similar area of the county the following was determined:

Each improved parcel was charged	\$45 each
Unimproved parcels, the first two (2)	\$40 each
Unimproved parcels, the third and fourth	\$15 each
Any addition parcel	\$ 5 each

Using this formula, approximately \$36,000 was generated, with delinquent taxes not being determined. Since that time the parcel count has remained basically the same with the money generated up to \$41,835 (Siskiyou County Auditor, 1997).

In June of 1994 the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors approved the “Amador” petition, based on adequate funding, and the passage of the measure. One hundred and forty five voters returned a 78% approval and the measure passed (Siskiyou County, 1994). In August 1994, the County Fire Warden appointed a citizen advisory board of five. In October 1994, the “Amador” contract went into affect with emergency response coverage for the McCloud area above that which was currently provided.

In January 1995, the advisory board approached the McCloud Service District Board for Mutual and Automatic Aid (see Definition of Terms) to enhance response capability. The fire chief, based on the belief that the volunteer firefighters would not respond if they knew a career station would also be responding, rejected the proposal. Further attempts have failed due to the fear of a declining volunteer enrollment.

Limitations were lead by the existence of the “Amador” program is Siskiyou County. This guided administrators to the traditional solution to a modified emergency response problem. State and county policy had to be interpreted to fit the current era.

## **DISCUSSION**

The relationship between the study results and the findings discussed in the literature review found that problems exist internally with CDF, Siskiyou County, and the private sector alike. Some policies and procedures were outdated within CDF and Siskiyou County, leaving chances for varied interpretation. CDF excels with the Mission, Vision and Value statements and including all of the basic needs of the citizens of California. The need seems to be in upgrading or updating of policy within the CDF to cope with the diverse need of California. CDF Ranger Unit Chiefs are also confined by policy limitations and the ability for a myriad of interpretations. Siskiyou County has transferred the responsibility of fire protection to the County Fire Warden who is the CDF Siskiyou Ranger Unit Chief (Davis, 1997). This places the burden of responding to the public need and trying to mitigate emergency response problem to a position with an advisory capability and little ability to mold change. County fire

responsibility needs to be based on research and not on traditional or political solutions.

Privatization may be an answer that the public will be looking towards in the future. The salary costs and modified staffing issues along with pre-suppression have been greatly defined in some communities by free enterprise.

The implications of the CDF and the Siskiyou County Fire community are clear and may become more wide spread. Some of these implications are:

- Enhanced awareness by the county for increased fire protection needs.
- An increase in public demand for emergency response service.
- CDF may be forced to change the current mission to include a full service department with year long emergency response capability.
- Volunteer companies will need to respond to the public need for service regardless of jurisdiction boundaries.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Business theorist Everett M. Rogers lists four ways to transform an organization: "...by destroying it, by restructuring it, by changing the individuals within, and by introducing new technology" (Baker, 1996). Follow-up contact with citizens and policy makers have generated several suggestions for improving the emergency response service capability in the McCloud area. This information is more general and some suggestions, and are in no particular order:

- Develop a "paid-call" firefighter program paying on a FC-42.
- Use existing policy to provide emergency response by the "Amador" contract.



- Modify the “Amador” policy to expand the staffing portion to guarantee two person engine response.
- Modify policy to allow for seasonal firefighters to be hired on contract during the winter months.
- Increase the fees to the citizens of the McCloud area to include a full service contract either with CDF or private.
- Form a Siskiyou County Fire Department expanding coverage to the McCloud area.
- Push for Automatic Aid agreements with the McCloud Service District.
- Contract with the McCloud Service District to provide a guaranteed two person response from a new station located south of the district.
- Form a Volunteer Fire Company in the affected area.
- Move one of the existing Amador stations to McCloud.
- Modify policy to allow for CDF Ranger Unit Chiefs to work within existing policy guidelines to provide service where needed by local government.

As stated these are listed randomly and the obvious cost to implement these has not been calculated. The incentives to make a difference at the local level lies within the fire station and Battalion Chief in the area. The real roadblock is in the individual interpretation of policy which can vary with each administration. Somehow standardization needs to be looked at and at the same time be loosened to allow for the modification of the local administration.

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## **APPENDIX A**

## SURVEY OF McCLOUD AREA

1. What is your perception of the emergency response capability to your home?

Excellent \_\_\_\_\_

Good / Fair \_\_\_\_\_

Needs Improvement \_\_\_\_\_

2. What level of service do you expect from your emergency responders?

Fire \_\_\_\_\_

Rescue / Medical \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Would contracting with Siskiyou County be an expectable solution?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

4. Would you be willing to pay for an increase in service?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

## SURVEY OF McCLOUD AREA - RESULTS -

1. What is your perception of the emergency response capability to your home?

Excellent 61

Good / Fair 9

Needs Improvement 10

2. What level of service do you expect from your emergency responders?

Fire 80

Rescue / Medical 80

Other 42

3. Would contracting with Siskiyou County be an expectable solution?

Yes 41

No 39

4. Would you be willing to pay for an increase in service?

Yes 71

No 9